



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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May 15, 2017

Flyway Council Chairs
Flyway Council FWS Representatives
Flyway Council Banding Committee Chairs

Beginning July 2, 2017, the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will no longer support the call center that receives reports of banded birds to the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). The toll-free number will remain operational after that date but *only* with a recorded message directing callers to the REPORTBAND website. Phone calls from Canada to this toll-free number will be directed to the Canadian Bird Banding Office who will continue to process band reports over the phone.

This was a challenging decision, but after discussion both internally and with the Flyway Technical Committees, we feel that it is the right decision. The main reasons for termination include:

- poor quality of information received from the call center contractor: data were inaccurate; the contractor was unresponsive to our complaints and the time needed for BBL staff to correct those inaccuracies caused other operations to suffer;
- fewer and fewer recoveries were coming in through the call center;
- we want to promote the use of online reporting: it is faster, more accurate and really is how we should be operating now and into the future;
- budgets are shrinking and the cost of information from the call center is quite high.

We recognize that some people prefer to report bird bands through a call center, a fact that we did not take lightly when making this decision. However, 60% of band reports to the BBL are currently made through the REPORTBAND website and over 90% of band reporters provide email addresses to the BBL, indicating that most have access to the Internet. We believe that most band reporters will adjust to using the REPORTBAND website to report bands and obtain their Certificates of Appreciation. The Flyway Technical Committees and State wildlife agencies have been and will continue to be a great help by encouraging increased use of the REPORTBAND website by the hunting community and other banders.

We value our partnership with the Flyways and remain committed to providing continued support for the management and conservation of migratory bird populations. There are many developing technologies for bird marking and data management which represent opportunities as well as challenges for the BBL and bird banders. We value your input – indeed the BBL needs advice from the Flyways - as we explore options to modernize BBL operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JBF', followed by a series of vertical wavy lines and a final loop.

John B. French, Jr., PhD
Center Director